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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/PMBS
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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [RP](#)
SUBJECT: CPP/NPA DENOUNCES BALIKATAN EXERCISE

REF: 04 MANILA 5865

Classified By: (U) Political Officer Paul O'Friel
for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (SBU) On February 11, Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal, the spokesman for the Communist Party of the Philippines/New Peoples Army (CPP/NPA), denounced the upcoming annual Balikatan exercise as "a blatant mockery of Philippine sovereignty." Rosal claimed US troops intended to "interfere" in the armed conflicts in the Philippines, using the "pretext" of relief efforts to conduct military operations.

12. (SBU) US forces, in partnership with their Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) counterparts, will conduct humanitarian assistance and civil affairs programs during the February 21-March 6 Balikatan exercise, targeting the storm ravaged provinces of Quezon and Laguna, which were badly hit by December 2004 flooding that killed over 1,000 people. These projects will include medical and dental outreach to affected communities and light construction projects to rebuild schools and clinics. In December 2004, in the immediate aftermath of the floods, Task Force 535 (reftel) airlifted over 400,000 pounds of badly needed relief supplies to Quezon and neighboring Aurora province.

13. (C) COMMENT. The CPP/NPA has long considered Quezon "theirs." The province is home to the Melito Glor Command formerly headed by Rosal. Despite (or perhaps because of) the warm welcome received by US soldiers and Marines associated with JTF 535, the CPP/NPA vigorously protested the December 2004 US disaster assistance, calling for the pull-out of all US troops engaged in relief efforts. Although Ka Roger's December 15, 2004 press statement conceded that CPP/NPA's signed agreement with the government strictly forbids attacks against troops engaged in humanitarian missions, CPP/NPA leader Jose Maria Sison quickly clarified the following day that this agreement did not apply to the US military. Sison sullenly asserted the NPA was "magnanimously" not targeting US troops to give them the chance to leave the Philippines as quickly as possible. Despite the Communists' bombast, we do not believe CPP/NPA central authorities are ready/capable to take action against US forces engaged in joint humanitarian assistance operations.

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